

## DISTRICT FIVE SCHOOLS OF SPARTANBURG COUNTY

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July 14, 2008

Mr. Al Simpson  
Chairperson  
South Carolina Board of Education  
South Carolina Department of Education  
1429 Senate St.  
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Mr. Simpson:

On behalf of the seven school districts of Spartanburg County, I respectfully submit this request for a waiver to State Board of Education Regulations 43-234(3)(D) and 43-259(1)(D)(3) relating to dual credit, as excerpted below.

**R43-234(3)(D):**

Students enrolled in a South Carolina public school may take only courses that are applicable to baccalaureate degrees or to associate degrees offered by institutions accredited by the New England Association of Colleges and Schools, the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, the Western Association of Colleges and Schools, or the Northwest Association of Colleges and Schools.

**R43-259(1)(D)(3):**

Students enrolled in a South Carolina public school may take for credit only courses applicable to baccalaureate degrees or to associate degrees in arts or in science offered by institutions that are accredited by the New England Association of Colleges and Schools, the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, the Western Association of Colleges and Schools, or the Northwest Association of Colleges and Schools.

These sections impede our ability to achieve components of our districts' strategic plans and, correspondingly, to implement the College LINK (Learning Institution for Navigating Knowledge) program, a dropout prevention program instituted at Spartanburg Community College; and to replicate the Gateway to College, a nationally recognized dropout retrieval program whereby eligible students simultaneously complete through dual credit a high school diploma and a postsecondary credential.

All district strategic plans include goals to decrease dropout rates, increase graduation rates, and improve collaborative initiatives in order to enhance the transition of students into postsecondary education. The aforementioned regulations impede our ability to implement the College LINK program and to replicate the Gateway to College, which are important and innovative ways to address these goals.

The superintendents of the seven Spartanburg County school districts, along with the president of Spartanburg Community College, spearheaded the development of the College LINK program aimed at preventing the dropout of rising juniors and seniors that

SL&A-02-1

Page 2  
July 14, 2008

have been met with life circumstances that hinder them from completing their high school diploma through traditional means. Although this program meets a particular population of at-risk students it does not provide an avenue for students who have already dropped out and/or need critical remediation. Extensive research on model programs for at risk/dropout youth has resulted in identifying the Gateway to College program as the one that would best complement the College LINK program in providing recovery and retention services to at-risk students. And in June 2008, we were invited by the Gateway to College replication committee at Portland Community College to submit a Letter of Interest as the first step to receive a three-year grant to support program implementation.

The College LINK program will enroll at-risk students, aged 17-20, in a postsecondary curriculum at Spartanburg Community College and will simultaneously remain enrolled in their home high school so they may complete requirements for a high school diploma through dual credit. Students placement will be assessed based on a reading, writing and mathematical skill assessment and will be placed in academic courses first based on the courses needed to complete their diploma and second based on their career and college goals.

Although somewhat similar, the Gateway to College [www.gatewaytocollege.org](http://www.gatewaytocollege.org) will enroll dropout youth, aged 17-20, in a postsecondary curriculum at Spartanburg Community College and will simultaneously re-enroll them in their home high schools so they may complete requirements for a high school diploma through dual credit. Students will be initially placed in academic foundation/remediation courses during their first term, and upon successful completion, will take regular college courses with the general college population until all program requirements are completed. Students will graduate with a high school diploma and significant College credit, up to and including an associate degree. All courses are Spartanburg Community College courses taught by College faculty on the Spartanburg Community College campus. During their studies, students will also receive comprehensive support services and close monitoring to help ensure their success.

A waiver to the aforementioned State Board of Education regulations is being requested to enable the broad spectrum of courses offered through Spartanburg Community College to qualify for dual credit. In order to support the College LINK program and Gateway to College, the five types of Spartanburg Community College courses, as listed below, need to be allowed for dual credit, when those courses meet or exceed high school content, either without modification or with appropriate supplemental instruction. Also, please note that a similar waiver for the same purpose was requested by Anderson School District Five and approved by the State Board of Education on March 8, 2006 in support of the Gateway to College program at Tri-County Technical College.

Technical and Community College Course Types:

Type I (Developmental) – remedial (content at secondary level). Example: MAT 032, Developmental Mathematics.

Page 3  
July 14, 2008

Type II (Pre-requisite) – preparatory (content at secondary level). Example: BIO 100, Introduction to Biology.

Type III (Technical general education) – (content at postsecondary level), includes liberal arts courses required for graduation in career programs. Example: ENG 155, Communications I.

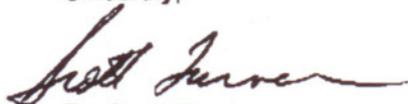
Type IV (Occupational) – (content at postsecondary level), includes technical courses required for graduation in career associate degree programs like Associate in Business. Example: ACC 101, Accounting Principles I.

Type V (Transfer)– (content at postsecondary level), includes University transfer courses applicable toward baccalaureate degrees or toward graduation requirements in Associate in Arts and Associate in Science degree programs. Example: ENG 101, English Composition I.

Students in the College LINK and Gateway to College programs will successfully complete all requirements for the high school diploma, which will be awarded by each student's sponsoring high school. Program coordinators and school officials will ensure that the content of all College courses meets or exceeds that of corresponding high school courses for which there is a direct equivalent, especially in subjects directly related to end-of course testing or the required high school exit exam.

The College LINK and Gateway to College programs provide a rigorous yet achievable way for students who have been unsuccessful in our traditional high schools to earn a diploma and a postsecondary credential. The school districts of Spartanburg County appreciate your support and that of other State Board members as we work to implement this model program for dropout youth who deserve a real second chance for success.

Sincerely,



Dr. Scott Turner  
Superintendent  
Spartanburg School District Five

cc: Dr. Jimmy Littlefield, Spartanburg School District One  
Dr. Scott Mercer, Spartanburg School District Two  
Dr. Jim Ray, Spartanburg School District Three  
Dr. Rally Liston, Spartanburg School District Four  
Dr. Daryl Owings, Spartanburg School District Six  
Dr. Thomas White, Spartanburg School District Seven